The Man with The Iron Hand.

Legler.

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CHEVALIER HENRY DE TONTY'S EXPLOITS IN THE VALLEY OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

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MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN.
1896.

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INTRODUCTION.

In the geographical nomenclature of the North American continent are perpetuated the names of the adventurous men whose achievements have made the story of the great lakes region the most romantic period of American history. Cities, rivers and islands suggest by their names the adventures of hardy coureur de bois and zealous Jesuit and Sulpitian priests. The names of La Salle, DuLuth, Joliet, Perrot, d'Iberville, Bienville, Marquette and Allouez have been thus associated with the scenes of their adventures. Even Louis Hennepin, the vainglorious Franciscan friar, has had honor done his name by two great commonwealths of the old Northwest. But nowhere on the modern map—from the Gulf of Mexico to Baffin's Bay and from the Vermilion Sea to the Bay of Fundy, appears the name of Chevalier Henry de Tonty.

Historians have accorded Tonty a meagerness of mention amounting to neglect. With singular unanimity—for, like the doctors, historians are wont to disagree in their judgments—they have recognized his right to a leading place among the men whose courage and fortitude rendered possible the exploration and settlement of the great Mississippi basin; but a connected narrative of Tonty's life remains to-day unwritten. It can be found only in scattered fragments, incidents that figure in the telling of other men's careers.[1]

1. A valuable article on the Tonty family has recently been written by the eminent Canadian historian, Benjamin Sulte. It is in French, and appears in Vol. XI. of the proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada. Mr. Sulte does not pretend to treat the

Perhaps the brilliance which has invested the achievements of the Sieur de la Salle has cast into shadow the part played by his steadfast friend and devoted companion. Perhaps, as has been suggested by Jared Sparks, Tonty's remarkable history has never been fitly told because there were with him few to observe and fewer to record his achievements.

The memoir of Tonty preserved in the archives of the French marine department, is a bare recital, disappointing in its lack of detail, though admirably free from vaunting comment or self-praise. The narrative, moreover, comes to an abrupt conclusion during the middle of its author's career in the Mississippi valley region.

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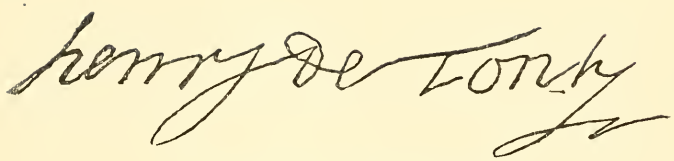
subject exhaustively, but aims rather to inspire the writing of a complete biography of Henry de Tonty by calling attention to the unwritten history of La Salle's companion, and suggesting the abundant possibilities contained in such material.



(Fac-simile of Tonty's signature as it appears on the document reciting the formalities attendant upon taking possession of the Mississippi Valley.)

THE MAN WITH THE IRON HAND.

I.

UNDER THE LILIES OF FRANCE.

When the lazzaroni of Naples were stirred to bloody revolt by the peasant fisherman Masaniello, in 1647, two men of distinction took a leading part in the insurrection. One was the famous painter Salvator Rosa; the other Lorenzo Tonty, a Neapolitan banker who had achieved some note as a financier. The Spanish viceroy's arbitrary rule over the peasantry prompted these men to warm espousal of the people's cause. Tonty seized the fortress of Gaeta, in the suburbs of Naples, and successfully maintained possession during Masaniello's reign of seven eventful days. When Masaniello, whom success converted from a patriot into a capricious despot, was assassinated by his own men, Tonty sought an asylum in Paris. There his fellow-countryman, the crafty Cardinal Mazarin, reigned prime minister of France, the chosen successor of Cardinal Richelieu. It was an era when wars and corrupt officials had depleted the royal treasury. In the year 1653 Tonty suggested to the cardinal that the king's purse might be replenished by a system of life insurance that to this day retains the name tontine. The first trial resulted in failure, though later the French king used the tontine plan to good advantage as a means to fill his coffers. Tonty incurred the royal displeasure and was committed to the Bastile. There he languished many years.

Henry de Tonty was the son of this man. Born in the year 1650, he was eighteen years old when he entered the French army as a cadet, serving in 1668 and 1669. In seven campaigns he fought under the lilies of France, four on board ships of war and three in the galleys. That he served with valor is indicated by his successive promotion from cadet to midshipman, to lieutenant and to the rank of captain. At Messina he was placed in charge of a camp of 20,000 men.

During the fierce fighting at Libisso a grenade shot away his right hand. It is related of him that while awaiting the delayed services of a surgeon, Tonty, with admirable nerve, amputated the ragged rem-

nant of his hand with a knife. The lost member of flesh was replaced by a hand constructed of iron, which he usually wore gloved.[2]

Taken prisoner at Libisso, for six months Tonty was confined at Metasse. His release was effected by exchanging for him the son of the governor of that place. Upon his return to France, the king bestowed 300 livres upon him in recognition of his services. He again joined in the hardships of the Sicilian campaign, serving as a volunteer in the galleys. Peace threw him out of employment and he was again an inactive soldier of fortune in Paris, restlessly hoping for renewal of hostilities.

It was in 1677 that Robert de la Salle reached France from Montreal, to seek the countenance of the court in the prosecution of the vast designs he had formed for exploring the unknown interior of the continent south of the great lakes. Upon recommendation of Prince Conti, whose favor Tonty seems to have won by his valorous conduct in the French wars, La Salle engaged the young man as his lieutenant.

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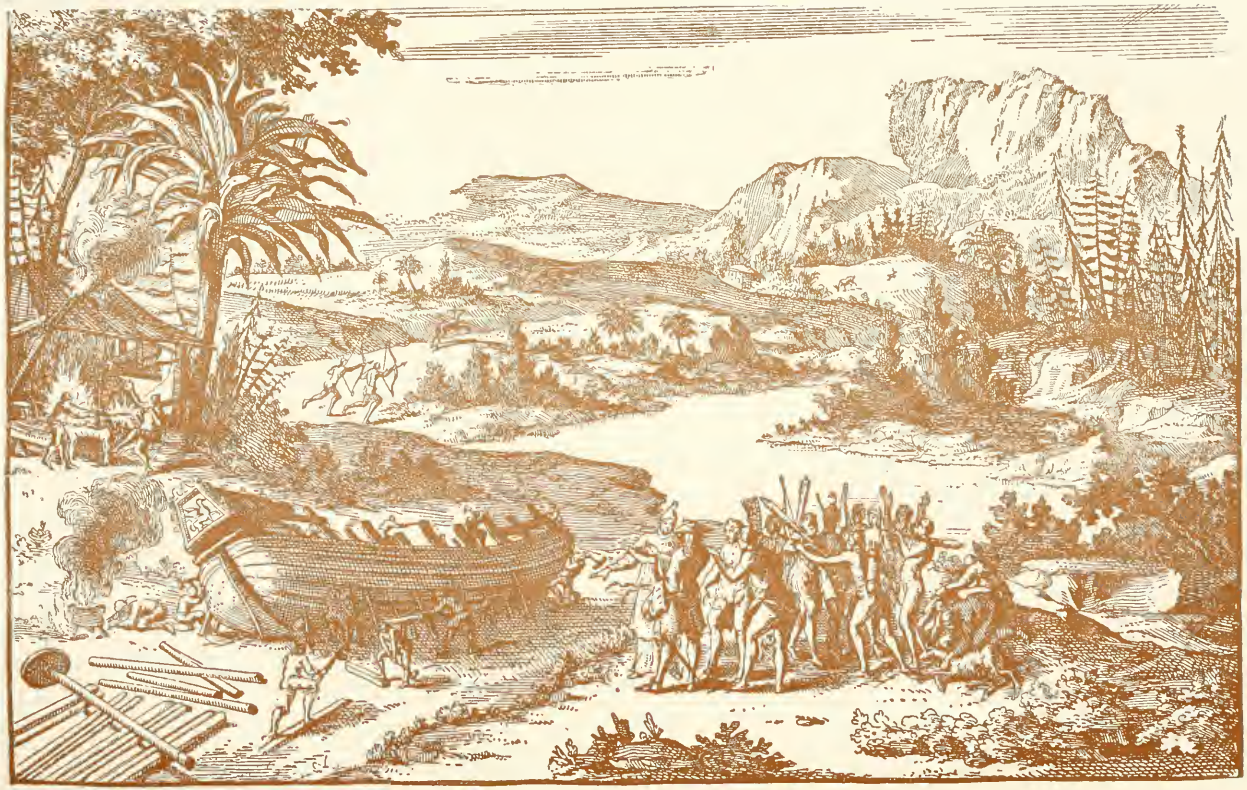
2. "Tonty carried a hand made of copper, in lieu of one lost in battle."—History of Illinois, by Moses. Vol. I., p. 73.

"He (Tonty) wore a hand of iron or some other metal, which was usually covered with a glove."—Parkman's La Salle, p. 116.

"Duluth was a cousin of Tonty with the silver hand, as La Salle's friend was designated because of his metal member."—Winsor's Cartier to Frontenac, p. 273.

"La Salle returned from France, accompanied by the brave officer Henry Tonty, who had lost one hand in battle, but who, with an iron substitute for the lost member, could still be efficient in case of a conflict."—Edw. D. Neill in "Discovery Along the Great Lakes."

La Potherie is quoted by Parkman as saying that Tonty used his metal hand once or twice to good purpose when the Indians became disorderly, "in braking the heads of the most contumacious or knocking out their teeth. Not knowing at the time the secret of the unusual efficacy of his blows, they regarded hir a 'medicine' of the first order."



BUILDING OF THE GRIFFON, 1679, UNDER TONTY'S DIRECTION.

(Fac-simile reproduction of the original copper-plate engraving first published in Hennepin's "Nouvelle Decouverte," Amsterdam, 1704. The Griffon was the first sailing vessel that ever plowed the waters of Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan. It was wrecked in Green Bay, off Washington Island.)

II.

THE BUILDING OF THE GRIFFON.

On the voyage from Rochelle, whence they sailed July 14, 1678, to Quebec, where they arrived two months later, La Salle learned to appreciate the many good qualities of which his lieutenant was later to give him such signal proof. Here La Salle formed the only intimate friendship of his life, and was rewarded by attaching to himself a man whose loyalty and disinterested devotion ceased only with death.

It was the purpose of La Salle to follow up the discoveries of Joliet and Marquette in their Mississippi voyage, and to ascertain by descending to the mouth whether that stream disembogued into the Vermilion Sea (Gulf of California), the Gulf of Mexico, or was indeed the long-sought medium of communication with Japan and China—the Cipango and Cathay of Marco Polo. In the ship that bore the adventurers to New France were the materials for building a vessel to navigate the lakes. Artisans skilled in such construction had also been brought along.

Without loss of time, the companions set about in making preparations for their journey into an unknown country. The marvelous energy and fertility of resource displayed by Tonty astonished and delighted La Salle.

"His honorable character and his amiable disposition were well-known to you," he wrote to Prince Conti with enthusiasm unusual in this cold man, "but perhaps you would not have thought him capable of doing things for which a strong constitution, an acquaintance with the country and the use of both hands seemed absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, his energy and address make him equal to anything; and now, at a season when everybody is in fear of the ice, he is setting out to begin a new fort, two hundred leagues from this place."

In making the trip to Niagara from Ft. Frontenac, on Lake Ontario where the modern city of Kingston now is, Tonty experienced the first evidence of the secret treachery directed against La Salle. The boat in which they came was wrecked through the obstinacy of the pilot, who had doubtless been tampered with by the enemies of La Salle. Niagara was selected as the site of the shipyard. It was win-

ter, but the work of building the boat was begun with great energy, the distrustful Seneca Indians having been first placated in a measure by liberal presents. They had brought up the St. Lawrence and along the twelve-mile portage trail of the Niagara gorge the anchors, cordage, sails and other material needful for equipment of the vessel they were to build. La Salle remained long enough to drive the first bolt, and returned to Ft. Frontenac, at the other end of the lake. He left Tonty in command with instructions to complete the vessel.

It was a task of some magnitude that devolved upon this man. If he had an iron hand, he had a will of steel. The Senecas of the vicinity, doubtless inspired to hostility not only by the enemies of La Salle at Montreal, but also suspicious that the ribbed structure growing before their eyes meant menace to the western fur trade which they had heretofore monopolized, threatend to make a bonfire of the vessel. Provisions were scant, the boat wrecked by the treacherous pilot having contained a needed supply. But for the prowess of two New England Indians whom La Salle had attached to his service and who became his devoted followers, the thirty men and the Father Recollect (Hennepin) with Tonty would have starved. The Senecas would furnish no corn, and even the Mohegan hunters could not supply enough game to fill the stomachs of the hungry, cold and dispirited men. These men grumbled and were with difficulty prevented from resorting to mutiny or desertion. To add to the trials of this stranger in a strange land, Father Hennepin, the Recollect accompanying the party, did not spare his peevish complaints—doubtless prompted by envy, because La Salle had not placed him in command. It was here that Tonty made an enemy of the Franciscan by bluntly advising him to confine his efforts to the spiritual affairs of the party.

Under these trying conditions was constructed the first vessel that ever plowed the waters of Lakes Erie, Huron and Michigan. As it progressed towards completion, the Iroquois braves grew more menacing. One of them attempted to kill the blacksmith, but the latter kept the Indian at bay with a bar of red-hot iron, till assistance arrived. The feverish energy of Tonty spurred the men to similar exertion, despite their sullen discontent bred by privation, cold and danger of attack.

In May the vessel was ready to launch. Amid the roar of her cannon and the chorus of the Te Deum from thirty bearded throats, the vessel slid from her stocks into the Niagara river—safe at last from the threatened molestation of the Indians. As a further precaution, the vessel was towed into mid-stream. Five cannon ominously glowered from her portholes upon the Indians on the bank and gave warning of the danger that lay in wait for hostile visitors.

The testimony of the hardships and trials that beset Tonty during this winter's work of boat-building is furnished by others than himself. In his own memoir he assumes no credit for himself. The

building of a vessel in the midst of hostile Indians, several hundred miles from the nearest settlement of Frenchmen, with a half-starved and half-frozen crew inspired to mutiny by agents of the Montreal merchants, is a long story, but he tells it in a line. It is worth while to quote what he says about it in his memoir, as characteristic of this man:

"The boat was completed in the spring of 1679" is his laconic description of the winter's eventful experiences.

III.

INTO THE WILDERNESS OF THE WEST.

It was not until summer was well advanced that La Salle joined the party aboard the Griffon, as the vessel of 45 tons burden was christened. The heraldic emblem of Count Frontenac, governor of New France, was a representation of this fabulous monster, half eagle and half lion. In his honor had the name been given, and a griffin had been rudely carved in wood at the prow.

"I will yet make the griffin fly above the crows," were the savage words of La Salle in emphasizing his regard for Count Frontenac and his cordial dislike of the black-gowned Jesuits.

It was thus with moody satisfaction that he named his vessel the "Griffon" and sailed in quest of the means that should bring confusion upon his enemies. Upon his return to Ft. Frontenac he had learned that their machinations had resulted in the seizure of his fort and all his possessions on some specious pretexts.

Tonty did not sail in the first trip that the Griffon made. He went ahead in a bark canoe in quest of some men whom La Salle had dispatched into the Illinois country some months before to secure supplies and to barter for beaver skins. Arrived at the Straits (Detroit), Tonty sent up three columns of smoke, and on the tenth of August his signal greeted the party on the vessel. Tonty here embarked with his men, and the Griffon passed up the straits. On the 23d, Lake Huron first felt upon its surface the cutting keel of a sailing vessel. It was not long before one of the terrible fall gales which sweep over that broad sheet of water sent the little craft trembling between the engulfing waves.

"Our people lost all hope of escape," says the account of Father Membré, one of the Recollets of the party, "but a vow which they made to St. Anthony of Padua, the patron of mariners, delivered them by a kind of miracle, so that, after long making head against the wind, the vessel on the 27th reached Missilimakinak."

The good father does not give minute details as to the nature of the vow offered to St. Anthony of Padua. When their terror had abat-

ed with the storm, the crew doubtless forgot all about it. The vessel was destined to meet with sad mishap later on.[3]

At this time Michilimackinac was the Jesuit stronghold in the western country. Here were gathered also the lawless rangers of the woods, who set at defiance the inhibition of the authorities at Montreal relative to the trade in beaver furs. The Ottawas and Hurons gathered here were also inimical to La Salle. Four of La Salle's men who had been sent ahead to barter were found here and were arrested. They had dissipated the goods entrusted to them and bred hostility to their chief. Tonty went to the Sault Ste. Marie and captured two other deserters; the others of the fifteen men escaped.

Early in September the Griffon sailed into Green Bay, mooring at one of the islands (probably Washington Island) whose astonished inhabitants gazed with wonder at this "house that walked on the water." Nearly half a century before Jean Nicolet had skirted the same island, the first white man to step upon Wisconsin soil. The Pottawattamies who then inhabited the cluster of islands at the entrance of the Bay proved friendly. La Salle loaded his vessel with beaver skins and dispatched it back to Niagara in order to appease his creditors with the valuable cargo. He directed that this done, the Griffon should immediately return to Lake Michigan with additional supplies.

The Griffon was never seen again. Whether she foundered in a storm or whether the crew—ripe for mutiny before their departure,—scuttled the vessel after rifling the cargo and then escaped to the Indians of the North, forever remained a mystery.[4]

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3. Hennepin gives a highly-colored picture of the storm. He remarks that even La Salle's courage disappeared before the storm's fury.

4. "They sailed the 18th, with a westerly wind, and fired a gun on taking leave. It was never known what course they steered, nor how they perished; but it is supposed that the ship struck upon a sand, and was there burried. This was a great loss, for that ship with its cargo cost above 60,000 livres."—Hennepin's Description de la Louisiane," Paris, 1683.

IV.

THE COUNTRY OF THE ILLINOIS.

It had been agreed by La Salle and Tonty to rendezvous at the mouth of the Miamis river (St. Joseph) and to proceed thence to the Illinois river. La Salle, journeying down the western shore of Lake Michigan, passed the future sites of Milwaukee and Chicago. He arrived at the appointed place first, Tonty's search for the deserters at the Sault Ste. Marie having delayed him. Tonty made his way along the eastern shore of the lake. When within 90 miles of the Miamis, provisions gave out, and the party landed to hunt. Tonty pushed on to La Salle's camp. There he found a stockade partly constructed. La Salle was in an irritable frame of mind over the prolonged absence of the men, and Tonty's inability to give him news concerning the vessel which had left Green Bay freighted with furs, did not tend to soothe him. Tonty records in his narrative:

"He told me he wished all the men had come with me, in order that he might proceed to the Illinois. I therefore retraced my way to find them, but the violence of the wind forced me to land, and our canoe was upset by the violence of the waves. It was, however, saved, but everything that was in it was lost. For want of provisions we lived for three days on acorns."

Upon Tonty's return, the reunited party descended the Miamis, portaged to the desolate marshes that give birth to the Kankakee, and finally glided into the Illinois river. Near the site of the present town of Utica, they came upon a village of the Illinois Indians. The wigwams were vacant, for it was the season of the great winter hunt. The Frenchmen had consumed all their provisions, and in their necessity they did not scruple to open the village caches and to help themselves to corn stored therein.[5]

5. "The term cache, meaning a place of concealment, was originally used by the French Canadian trappers and traders. It is made by digging a hole in the ground, somewhat in the shape of a jug, which is lined with dry sticks, grass, or anything else that will protect its contents from the dampness of the earth. In this place the goods to be concealed are carefully stowed away."—Gregg's Commerce of the Prairies, vol. I, p. 68.

Dispirited by the fatigues of the journey, and the certainty of hardships and dangers yet to come, some of the men had planned to desert. Fortunately—or rather unfortunately as the sequel proved—it turned so bitterly cold that they did not venture to do so.

Continuing their river route, the entire party floated into Lake Peoria—an expansion of the stream, and at its lower end were made aware of the proximity of Indians by curling columns of smoke. Uncertain as to the reception that would be accorded them by Indians whose underground granaries they had pillaged, and who had been represented to them long before as hostile, the Frenchmen at once placed themselves on the defensive. The boats were ranged in line, La Salle on the left and Tonty on the right, and they boldly headed for the Indian encampment.

There the unexpected appearance of the little fleet had created the utmost consternation. The squaws and their children ran screaming into the woods, and some of the valiant red men deemed it prudent to follow. Others, however, as the white men landed and gave no evidence of hostile intentions, advanced with that universally recognized emblem of good will—the calumet. The Frenchmen responded by holding aloft the same token of peace. The calumet was thereupon danced to La Salle and Tonty, who hastened to cement the friendship by compensating the Illinois for the fifty bushels of corn taken from their caches. This alliance with the Illinois, which was to play such a large part in the career of Tonty, occurred Jan. 3, 1680.

V.

THE FORT OF THE BROKEN HEART.

It was not long before troubles accumulated. No word came to the anxious voyageurs concerning the Griffon. Letters had been suspended conspicuously from the branches of trees along the route to guide expected messengers upon the return of the vessel.

But no messengers came.

Instead, the altered demeanor of the Indians gave ground for the belief that the emissaries of La Salle's enemies had followed him even to these remote regions.

So it proved.

Under cover of night a Wisconsin Indian entered the village and in a secret council of the chiefs poisoned their good will by declaring that the strangers enjoying their hospitality were agents come to betray them to their dreaded foes—the Iroquois. He then returned to his Wisconsin wilderness as silently as he had come.

When La Salle and Tonty sought to enlist the Illinois chiefs in their Mississippi exploration, the Indians responded by describing, with the picturesque exaggeration appertaining to their phraseology, the terrible dangers that would have to be encountered. Alarmed by these tales, the insubordination of the miserable crew accompanying La Salle and Tonty came to the surface. An attempt was made to poison La Salle. Some of the men deserted, and their departure redoubled the suspicions of the Illinois that treachery was meditated.

Amid such discouragements a fort was built, and the construction begun of a vessel designed for sailing down the Mississippi. Yielding to an impulse of despondency unusual in this man of unbending will, La Salle called the fort Crevecoeur—Broken Heart.

Early in March La Salle's impatience concerning the long expected tidings of his vessel prompted him to the sudden resolution to go back to Ft. Frontenac. Two days before he had sent Father Hennepin and two companions down the Illinois with instructions to explore the upper Mississippi. He departed on his own perilous trip of 1,200 miles overland with a faithful Indian hunter and three Frenchmen. He left Tonty in command of the fort.

Tonty had but eighteen men, including two Recollet fathers, Gab-

riel de la Ribourde and Zenobe Membré. The latter later became the historian of the party.

Shortly after La Salle's departure messengers arrived from Ft. Miamis. They told Tonty that La Salle had been there and had dispatched them hither to tell him to erect a fort on a commanding eminence facing the Illinois river some distance further up. While Tonty, with four men, was making a preliminary survey of this place, the messengers from the Miamis completed the defection of the men at Crevecoeur by telling them that La Salle's ambitious projects had crumbled; that the Griffon had foundered in a gale; that his effects at Frontenac had been seized by the Montreal creditors and that there remained no hope of recompense from him for services that had remained unpaid since the beginning of the disastrous trip. The men seized the opportunity afforded by Tonty's absence. They pillaged the fort and wantonly destroyed what they could not carry away. On a plank of the unfinished vessel one of the deserters scrawled this message with charcoal: "Nous sommes tous sauvages." ("We are all savages.")

The Recollect fathers, the Sieur de Boisrondet, and three other men, the remnant of the party, hastened to Tonty to apprise him of the serious events occurring in his absence. On the way two of these men also deserted, after destroying the firearms of the Sieur de Boisrondet and the only other man who proved loyal. In this extremity Tonty at once dispatched the four men who had been with him in quest of the Sieur de La Salle with an account of the unfortunate sacking of the fort. With his four remaining companions, he resigned himself to the dreary prospect of awaiting the return of their chief with re-enforcements. To maintain Fort Crevecoeur or to fortify the rock designated by La Salle as a site for a fort was out of the question. The two Recollects thereupon became domiciled in the Indian community in an earnest endeavor at conversion of the savages and the acquirement of their language. Tonty and the other two men took up their habitation in a cabin near the Indians.

VI.

RAID OF THE IROQUOIS.

So the summer wore away in impatient inactivity. But for the dependence placed upon him by La Salle to hold in close alliance the tribes of the Illinois country, (a most important factor in his plans) Tonty would have been tempted to retrace his steps out of this region of prairie and wood, delightful as it was after the melting of the snows had been succeeded by the swelling of buds and deepening verdure of the fertile prairie lands.

Tonty had succeeded in winning the friendship of the chiefs and in allaying suspicions aroused by the Mascoutin Indian from Wisconsin in their early coming, but untoward events again aroused them. In mid-September, while most of the young warriors were absent on a hunt, there came breathless into camp an Indian runner with the news that the dreaded Iroquois were on the war-path; that with them was La Salle and that they were then but a day's march away.

It was a critical moment for Tonty. Surrounded by the yelling braves, who were almost in a frenzy between fear of the fierce Iroquois and eagerness for revenge upon the supposed treacherous confederate in their midst, the life of Tonty seemed forfeit to their fury. His vehement denials of the accusation of treachery had less effect than his expressed willingness to lead them against the Iroquois—to fight if need be, to act as a messenger with peace proposals, if possible.

But the Illinois lacked the bravery that characterized their foes from the East, and but for Tonty's inspiring counsel they would doubtless have sought safety in flight, as they had done before. The Iroquois, who had expected to surprise the Illinois, were greatly chagrined to find that their plans had miscarried, and no less so to observe the unwonted courage of the Illinois in coming to meet them. Seeing their hesitation and likewise noting the greater strength of the opposing force, Tonty concluded that he would attempt to bring about peace. Bearing a necklace in his hand as an offering, he approached unarmed the hostile columns, accompanied by the Recollect fathers and the Sieur de Boisrondet. As the Iroquois greeted their advance with musket shots, Tonty sent back all his companions and continued alone on his mission.

He received no friendly greeting.

Immediately surrounded by the young braves, whom the older chiefs could not restrain, Tonty received a knife thrust over the heart. The blade glanced off a rib, or his career would have ended here. An Indian contemptuously seized the necklace he had carried and threw it on the ground. Another grasped Tonty's hair and was about to add that trophy to his belt when the older chiefs interfered. An angry altercation ensued. Some wanted to make a living torch of Tonty; others wanted to set him at liberty, so as not to engage the French in their battle with the Illinois. Though suffering from his wound and surrounded by captors thirsting for his blood, Tonty assumed a bold attitude. He told the assembled braves that the Illinois warriors numbered 1,200 fighting men; that with them were 60 Frenchmen who would aid them in the fight; that the Iroquois, in making war upon the Illinois, were fighting the children of the king of France, and would incur his displeasure. He counseled them to peace.

The crafty Iroquois, who were masters of the art of forest diplomacy, as they were of savage warfare, pretending acquiescence, engaged Tonty to carry proposals of peace. Bleeding from his wound and weakened by the loss of blood, Tonty undertook this mission.

In the meantime there had been some harmless skirmishing. When Tonty had been stabbed, an Indian brave had seized the Italian's hat and poising it upon the muzzle of his gun had waved it exultingly in the sight of the Illinois. Supposing Tonty to have been killed, the French fathers were overcome with joy when they saw Tonty coming towards them. He staggered into their welcoming arms, and they gave him such attention as their skill would allow.

The proposals of peace delighted the Illinois, who were on the verge of flight when Tonty came back to them. Many of them had already departed with the squaws and children to a place of refuge on an island near the mouth of the river. They told Tonty they would gladly make a peace. Tonty therefore returned to the Iroquois to further negotiate the terms. A young Illinois Indian, who had been sent as a hostage, nearly upset his plans by telling the Iroquois chieftains that his tribe was very glad to make the peace; that most of the men were away on a hunt; that if the Iroquois really wished for peace the Illinois were ready to give up the beaver skins they had stored and some slaves they had.

"I had much difficulty in getting out of the scrape," quaintly remarks Tonty in his memoir. "The Iroquois called me to them and loaded me with reproaches; they told me that I was a liar to have said that the Illinois had 1,200 warriors, besides the allies who had given them assistance. Where were the 60 Frenchmen who I had told them had been left at the village?"

Meantime the Illinois had burned the huts of their village and retreated to their island refuge. The Iroquois occupied the site and

built a fort. Tonty and his companions remained in their cabin near by. The crafty Iroquois, though pretending peace, began building elm-bark canoes. Observing this Tonty sent word to the Illinois that their foes meant to follow them to their island; he counseled them to retire to some distant nation while they yet had time.

On the eighth day after the arrival of the Iroquois, their chiefs called Tonty and Father Zenoble to council. Upon conclusion of the usual ceremonials, six packets of beaver skins were set before Tonty. Addressing him in the figurative speech which none knew how to employ to better advantage than the orators of the Five Nations, one of the chiefs explained their meaning:

The first two packets were "to inform M. de Frontenac that they would not eat his children and that he should not be angry at what they had done.

The third was a plaster for Tonty's wound.

The fourth was some oil to rub on his and Father Zenoble's limbs, on account of the long journeys they had taken.

The fifth that the sun was bright.

The sixth that the Frenchmen should profit by it and depart the next day for the French settlements.

Tonty received this polite invitation to depart with ill-concealed impatience. To leave the Iroquois to carry out their hostile intentions towards the Illinois meant the serious marring of the plan to establish a fortified chain of communication from Frontenac to the mouth of the great river, with the Indians of the country enroute as allies to maintain French supremacy. Undaunted by his apparent helplessness, he boldly faced the chiefs and inquired when they, too, would go away.

"We will eat some of the Illinois first," said one of them, whose diplomacy evaporated before the heat of his fierce eagerness for battle.

Upon this Tonty rose from his place in the council ring.

"Since you desire to eat the children of the Governor," he said sternly, "I will have none of your presents," and with a vigorous kick he sent the packets of beaver skins tumbling in all directions.

In a rage at this contemptuous treatment, the chiefs drove Tonty from the council. In their cabin near the Indian fort, the Frenchmen barricaded themselves, determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible, for none of them expected to live out the night. Here they remained till daybreak, when, realizing the uselessness of further endangering the lives of himself and companions, Tonty directed the party to a canoe and they hastily departed—which they were enabled to do unmolested. The sufferings which they underwent and the fortitude they displayed in their journey in search of relief at Green Bay scarcely finds a parallel in the history of the Northwest.

Historic Places in Tonty's Career.

Niagara—'The Shipyard of the Griffon,' as Cyrus K Remington terms the spot where Tonty built the pioneer vessel.

Ft. Miamis — Base of operations for La Salle and Tonty's two Mississippi expeditions.

Washington Island.— The Island in Green Bay whence the Griffon sailed on her disastrous voyage.

Ft Crevecoeur.—The Fort of the Broken Heart.

Starved Rock.—Site of Tonty's stronghold, the Fort of St. Louis on the Illinois.

Michilmackinac.—French Post, where Tonty and La Salle met after the great Iroquois raid.

Old Biloxi—Where Tonty lies buried.

VII.

DEATH OF FATHER GABRIEL.

In their leaky canoe, Tonty and his companions toiled for five hours up the stream, and were finally compelled to land to repair their frail craft. Here the career of aged Father Gabriel de la Ribourde came to a tragic close. A leafy arbor 1,000 paces away invited him to its friendly shelter for meditation and prayer.

He never returned.

Alarmed at his prolonged absence, Tonty went to look for him. Instead of the good father, he found the recent trail of many Indians, whether of pursuing Iroquois or others it was impossible to tell. Vainly he fired his musket. In vain he shouted the name of Father Gabriel; there was no answering voice save reverberating echo. With sad hearts the men crossed the river to spend the night. They built a huge fire as a beacon, and kept guard for signs of the father's coming. At midnight the forms of several men were descried on the opposite shore, and gave confirmation to their fears.

With daybreak they recrossed to reconnoitre. They vainly searched for Father Gabriel till long past noon, despite the danger they incurred by deferring their departure. At last reluctantly they resumed their way, keeping a sharp lookout along the bank.

Years afterwards the breviary of Father Gabriel was found among the Kickapoo Indians in Wisconsin, and the mystery of his fate became known. While absorbed in prayer, he had been discovered by a wandering band of these Indians, and they cruelly crushed in his skull with a club, scalped him, and threw his body into a deep hole. It was perhaps a blessing in disguise that Father Gabriel's sufferings ended at the beginning of this journey, for this man of 70 years could never have withstood the terrible privations and fatigues to which his companions were about to be subjected.[6]

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6. According to Hennepin, as quoted by Shea, Father Gabriel Ribourde was the last scion of a noble Burgundian house, who not only renounced his inheritance and the world to enroll himself among the lowly children of St. Francis, but even when advanced in life and honored with the dignities of his order, sought the new and toilsome mission of Canada. Consulting his zeal, rather than his age, he embarked with La Salle. He was 70 years old when killed.

By mischance Tonty determined to seek succor at Green Bay among the friendly Pottawattamies, instead of going by the longer route along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan to Michilimackinac He thus missed La Salle, who with re-enforcements was hurrying along that route by way of Ft. Miamis to relieve Tonty. La Salle had reached Frontenac only to learn of further misfortunes. The Griffon had never been heard of after leaving what is known as Washington Island; a vessel from France sent to him with supplies had been wrecked in the St. Lawrence. His hopes seemed in ruins. To fill his cup of bitterness to overflowing Tonty's messengers reached him with the story of the dismantling of Ft. Crevecoeur and the intention of the deserters to seek and to assassinate La Salle. Ambuscading the traitors, he killed two of them and took the others prisoners. Despite his fallen fortunes he managed to organize another company and hurried to the help of Tonty, whose position he knew to be critical on account of the threatened Iroquois invasion. He came to the rock whereon he had ordered a fort built; he reached the deserted Ft. Crevecoeur, where the message of the deserters scribbled on the side of the half-finished boat greeted him as if in derision of his hopes. In the deserted village of the Illinois he came upon the unburied bodies of the dead, disinterred by the vandal Iroquois, whose fury found full vent after Tonty's restraining presence had been removed. They had pursued the Illinois as Tonty had foretold, and with revolting atrocity had not only despoiled the graves of the dead, but had inflicted upon several hundred women and children the barbarities and tortures which Indian warfare demanded as the fitting sequel of victory. Among the dead La Salle searched with heavy heart for the body of his loyal friend, and then returned to his fort on the Miamis. There he spent the winter.

VIII.

FLIGHT TO GREEN BAY.

While La Salle was thus engaged, Tonty and his companions were painfully toiling along the western shore of Lake Michigan. In their crazy craft they coasted for days, living on nuts, roots and wild garlic which they dug from under the frozen snow. It grew bitterly cold, their footgear gave out and they improvised moccasins by cutting the beaver mantle of poor Father Gabriel into strips and tieing them on with thongs made of the same material. For fifteen days they subsisted on the scanty fare they dug out of the frozen ground, when the providential killing of a stag gave them renewed courage and sustenance. The Sieur de Boisrondet became lost in the forest and for ten days was looked upon as forever lost by his dispirited companions. When he rejoined them he told how he had lived alone in the woods, armed with a musket, but unprovided with flint and bullets. In his extremity he had melted a pewter dish into pellets and with the touch of a live coal successfully discharged his musket at a flock of wild turkeys. Thus he had kept alive his emaciated frame till he found his companions.

On St. Martin's day (Nov. 11) the eyes of the weary travelers were gladdened by the sight of a Pottawattamie village. But new disappointments awaited them. The village was deserted. The famished men eagerly gathered together a few handfuls of scattered corn and a few frozen gourds. While searching for more, a belated member of the party came up and began devouring the provisions, which he supposed had been left there for him. When the gleaners returned they found that he had not spared the corn and the gourds.

"We had much pleasure in seeing him again," says Tonty, "but little to see our provisions partly consumed."

They had formed the reckless determination to make an attempt to reach Michilimackinac in a canoe as a last hope, when they came upon another Indian trail. It led to another village, but the Indians had departed, leaving the slumbering embers of a fire. This was about the place where the Sturgeon Bay canal opens into Lake Michigan. In the hope of coming upon the Indians, the weary men made a portage to Sturgeon creek. Failing to come upon the savages, they

determined to go back to the Indian village to secure at least the comfort of dying by a fire.

They were now in their last extremity. Tonty was attacked by a fever and his legs were swollen terribly. In his hunger one of the men had made a meal of part of Father Gabriel's mantle of hide, and suffered so excruciatingly from indigestion as to be unable to proceed. The creek had frozen so as to render navigation by canoe impossible. The last hope seemed to be gone, when two Indians chanced that way and brought the long-sought relief to the famishing men. Among the well-disposed Pottawattamies, in what is now the peninsula of Door County, Wis., Tonty spent the winter and recuperated from the hardships of his terrible journey. In the spring he crossed to Michilimackinac. To their mutual joy, Tonty and La Salle there met and told each other what adventures had befallen each, since their parting at Ft. Crevecoeur, twelve months before.

IX.

AT THE MOUTH OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

Rejoiced to find his loyal lieutenant ready to second his efforts, La Salle energetically prepared for another expedition to explore the lower Mississippi. While he was collecting the sinews of war, the energetic Tonty repaired in advance to the Illinois country. In October (1681) La Salle joined him. Tonty had prepared sledges with which to cross the frozen rivers, and these conveyances greatly facilitated their journey. This time their route to the Illinois was by way of the Chicagou river. By the end of January (1682) they had reached the mouth of the Illinois river. For the first time Henry de Tonty saw the mighty Mississippi. For twenty years thereafter Tonty succeeded in maintaining French supremacy on this great stream. When the Wisconsin route to the river was practically closed to the French by the Foxes, the southern portage routes remained open through the exertions of Tonty.

The voyage down the Mississippi lasted three months. Tonty was the first white man to visit the Taensa Indians, a nation that dwelt in adobe huts, covered with cane mats. These Indians wore clothing woven from the bark of the mulberry tree; they worshiped the sun and had a large temple made of mud, wherein a fire was kept perpetually burning in adoration of their god. The ordinarily laconic Tonty has left a fairly full description of the curious customs which he noted among these Indians.

After numerous adventures, the party came to the deltas of the great river. La Salle went down one channel, Tonty's canoe another and a third party proceeded along the remaining channel. Soon the broad gulf of Mexico opened to their gaze, and the reunited parties prepared to encamp. The next day the solemn ceremony of taking possession in the name of the king of France was performed. Upon a column that was reared in this lonely spot were affixed the arms of France suitably inscribed. The Franciscan priest led the chant of the Te Deum and Exaudiat, the muskets rang out in unison, the men shouted "Vive le Roi" in hoarse accord, and the Indian followers—scarce knowing why—raised their voices in savage acclaim. Then a cross was erected and a notary drew up an account, which was signed

by La Salle, Tonty and eleven others. Thus was performed the ceremony whereby the king of France added to his goodly domain in the new world that vast region that came to be known as Louisiana, whose boundaries were later claimed to be the Rocky mountains and the Appalachian system on the west and east, the frozen sources of the Mississippi on the north and from Spanish Florida to Mexico on the south. "This stretch ran from corn to oranges; from sycamore to palmettos. The flood that coursed this enormous basin was one of the world's largest, draining an area of more than twelve hundred and fifty thousand square miles, sending twenty million of millions of cubic feet of water annually into the sea."[7]

This ceremony of tremendous future import occurred April 9th, 1682. Without loss of time, for food had become exhausted, the party prepared to return. They defeated an attacking band of Indians after killing ten of these swamp savages, and finally reached a friendly tribe, who gave them shelter.

La Salle was taken seriously sick, and he despatched Tonty to bear the news of their discovery to Count Frontenac. Thus Tonty was the first to give the intelligence that the waters of the Mississippi poured their vast volume into the gulf of Mexico.

On the way up the river, Tonty was waylaid by wandering Indians, who mistook him for an Iroquois and decided to burn him. But for the strenuous interposition of the Illinois Indians who accompanied him, Tonty would have been burned at the stake. He reached Michilimackinac in July, and three months later La Salle joined him.

Tonty at once repaired to the Illinois river to begin the construction of a fort. Here La Salle followed, and they completed the historic Ft. St. Louis on the massive cliff that to-day is known as Starved Rock.[8]

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7. The language of La Salle in taking possession, was somewhat obscure. Doubtless, says Sparks, his purpose was to take possession of the whole territory watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries on both sides.

8. A traditional interest attaches to this rock, says Parkman. A party of Illinois, assailed by the Pottawattamies, here took refuge and defied attack. At length they were all destroyed by starvation; hence the name of "Starved Rock."

SITE OF TONTY'S FORT AT STARVED ROCK.
(Near the town of Utica, Ill.)

X.

FORT ST. LOUIS ON THE ROCK.

Starved Rock rises one hundred and fifty feet from the edge of the water and is a sheer precipice on three sides. Only from behind can the top be reached, and thence with difficulty. The place is a natural fortress. Properly provisioned, a handful of men occupying the level acre on top could defy the siege or assault of an army.

The fort completed, Tonty went among the Indians of the surrounding country to seek allies. How well he succeeded in his mission is shown by the fact that soon the valley beneath him was a vast encampment of Illinois, Miamis, Shawanoes, Weas and Piankishaws—four thousand warriors. In the dozen villages of bark lodges were housed not less than 20,000 Indians, counting the women and the children. It had required all the tact and diplomacy of Tonty to bring about this confederation of hitherto mutually unfriendly tribes. Its continuance meant not only the supremacy of the French on the Mississippi, but the control of the whole western fur trade, which the Iroquois by conquest and plunder had been seeking to divert to the Dutch and English on the eastern coast.

Intent upon planting a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi to supplement Tonty's at Ft. St. Louis, on the Rock, La Salle decided to sail for France to secure more aid. He named his faithful friend as governor of the fort, and bade him farewell.

Tonty never saw him again.

La Salle had scarcely gone beyond recall when there came to the Rock the Chevalier de Baugis to displace Tonty as commandant, by order of the governor at Montreal. Count Frontenac had been recalled to France and the enemies of La Salle were triumphant in Montreal. Tonty surrendered the fort, but remained there; and before the corn grew again de Baugis was glad indeed to ask Tonty to share the command, for in March the Iroquois came. For six days the fierce Indians from the East besieged the Rock, eager to destroy the garrison. For once they met a foe whose valor and whose cunning exceeded their own. Tonty repulsed them with great loss and they retired into their own country.

Meanwhile, at the court of France, La Salle had found renewed royal favor, one evidence of which was that his confiscated fort of St.

Louis on the Illinois was restored to him. He sent the joyful news to Tonty, again placing him in command, and advising him that the expedition for the Mississippi mouth would soon be under way.

The fate of La Salle's disastrous quest for the mouth of the great river has often been told. First he quarreled with the naval commander, Beaujeu, who chafed because he had to serve under La Salle. The old captain seems to have been especially offended because La Salle expressly stipulated that in case ought happened to himself, Tonty should be sent for to command the expedition. When the ships passed by the mouth of the Mississippi and La Salle's vessel was wrecked in Matagorda Bay, Beaujeu set sail and abandoned La Salle on this inhospitable shore. On the Trinity river, La Salle was assassinated by some of his own men.

All unconscious of the fate of his friend, Tonty organized a party to descend the Mississippi and to meet La Salle. He had indeed heard that La Salle had landed, for in the autumn of 1685 Tonty journeyed from his eyrie on the Rock to Michilimackinac and there learned in a letter from the new governor that news had been received in France, upon the return of Beaujeu, that La Salle's expedition had safely landed. He returned on foot to the Rock, and in February (1686) left there with eleven Indians and twice that number of Frenchmen to meet his friend.

But no trace of his friend did the loyal Tonty find, save the column erected at the delta four years before—now fallen and half-submerged in the ooze of this swampy region. He sent canoes to coast along the shore both east and west, but the crews returned without tidings. In his anxiety to reach La Salle, he proposed to his men to cruise along the coast till they should come to Manhatte, but the unknown dangers appalled the men and they refused to accompany him. Disconsolately, Tonty prepared to return to Ft. St. Louis. The fallen column was again erected, out of reach of the hungry waters of the gulf, and Tonty wrote a letter for La Salle, which he entrusted to the keeping of a chief of the Bayagoulas.

The tenor of this letter is pathetic in the sincerity of the concern which the writer expresses for the welfare of La Salle and the assurances he gives that he would sacrifice everything to advance the interests of his friend. This letter, fourteen years later, was given by the Bayogoula chief to Pierre d'Iberville, and convinced that explorer that he had found the Mississippi, after Hennepin's misleading and spurious narration had led him to doubt that he was upon that river.[9]

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9. Hennepin never descended the Mississippi, but after La Salle's death claimed to have done so and wrote an account of his alleged trip. It was based on Le Clercq's narrative, which had been suppressed, but of which Hennepin had secured a copy. It was this fable of Hennepin's and the plagiarized and garbled version of Tonty's memoirs which Iberville had taken along as guides to give him an idea of the Mississippi country. Of course he failed to reconcile the descriptions with the actual facts.

At the Arkansas river, where on the previous voyage La Salle had conferred a seigneury upon the devoted Tonty, several of the men requested to be allowed to form a settlement and Tonty gave his consent.

Before Tonty's departure in search of La Salle, the new governor, Denonville, had sent word to Tonty that his aid would be wanted in a contemplated attack on the Iroquois in their own country. Upon his return from the fruitless trip down the Mississippi, Tonty raised a force of Indians and coureur de bois and proceeded to make the thousand-mile journey to the St. Lawrence. Before starting he gave his savages a dog-feast—a ceremony that ends with the devouring of a dog's heart raw, and which seems to inspire the Indians with unwonted courage. At the Straits (Detroit) he joined his cousin Du Luth and another party under Durantye. Shortly after the three chieftains made an important capture, in intercepting some Englishmen who were bound for the western country to set the Indians on the heels of the French.

Tonty's part in the campaign against the Senecas is told by Denonville in his official dispatches. He praises Tonty highly.[10] While advancing into the Indian country, the vanguard was ambuscaded by the crafty Senecas. Tonty was at the head of this ambushed force, and his knowledge of Indian warfare enabled him to meet the foe in such unexpected manner as to turn an anticipated rout of his men into a pursuit of the discomfited enemy.[11] The Seneca villages were laid waste, their ripening crops were leveled to the ground, and then for some unknown reason Denonville ceased his pursuit.

Tonty returned to the Rock, and there found Abbe Cavelier, La Salle's brother, and a number of companions who had found their way out of the Texas wilderness after La Salle's assassination. Instead of telling Tonty what had happened they deceived him into believing that La Salle was still alive and well in Texas, and would shortly follow them to the Illinois. Delighted to hear these welcome tidings, the generous Tonty not only treated the wanderers with every courtesy, but loaned the lying abbe merchandise to the value of 4,000 livres to enable him to continue his journey to France. The abbe and his companions departed on their way, rejoicing at the successful outcome of their deception.

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10. Documentary History of New York, vol. I.
11. Cf. Tonty's memoir, Margry, vol. I.

XI.

IN THE WILDERNESS OF THE SOUTH.

To the intense indignation of Tonty, shortly after he learned from one of the men who arrived from his post on the Arkansas, that he had been grossly deceived and that his generosity had been expended upon liars and ingrates. The priest, who later justified his deception of Tonty on the ground that the first news of La Salle's assassination was due the court of France, had not hesitated to tell the story to the men within the stockade on the Arkansas, when the haphazard wanderings of himself and companions brought their weary footsteps to that friendly shelter.

The faithful heart of Tonty was wrung by the intelligence, and the distressing situation in which the feeble remnant of La Salle's party at Matagorda Bay had been left by the conspirators appealed to his sense of chivalry. He determined to effect their rescue if possible, undeterred by the tremendous risks he ran in traversing the unknown wilderness intervening—a distance of hundreds of miles of swamp, forest and brake. Unconscious that the little colony had been swept into captivity by hostile savages, early in December of the year 1688 a canoe bore him, accompanied by five Frenchmen and three Indians, down the current of the Illinois for his third expedition down the Mississippi. It was not till the last of March that they found themselves on the Red River. The journey had been so arduous that all but one of the Frenchmen and one of the Indians refused to proceed. Despite his urgent entreaties, they retraced their steps.

With his two remaining followers and a slave Tonty pushed on. The Frenchman lost himself in a wood. Tonty found him, only to learn of new misfortunes, for in crossing a stream the latter had allowed the ammunition bag to slip off into the water. They had but a trifling quantity of powder remaining, and were thus in a sorry plight. Still Tonty would not give up. He pushed on from one Indian village to another, cementing friendships which he designed to use later on to secure a confederation of tribes for an attack upon the Spaniards of Mexico, with whom the French were now at war. At last he reached an Indian village where he learned that Frenchmen had not long before had their abode. The demeanor of these Indians

and their unsatisfactory explanation in accounting for the absence of the Frenchmen, aroused his suspicions that the Frenchmen had been murdered.

"I told them," he recounts in his narrative, "that they had killed the Frenchmen. Directly all the women began to cry, and thus I saw that what I had said was true. I would not, therefore, accept the calumet."

Reluctantly Tonty concluded to return, for the Indians would furnish him no more guides and his ammunition had become exhausted. He was then within 250 miles of the place where the ill-fated colony had been planted, and within three days' journey of the spot where the unburied bones of La Salle lay bleaching in the sun.

The return journey to the Mississippi was an uninterrupted series of incredible hardships, lasting from the beginning of May till July. The rainy season came on. Night and day the heavens opened their floodgates, till the whole country for a stretch of many miles was inundated. They made a raft, but found no dry land. Once they joyfully came upon a band of savages.

"We called to them in vain," narrates Tonty, "they ran away, and we were unable to come up with them. Two of their dogs came to us, which with two of our own we embarked the next day on our raft. We crossed fifty leagues of flooded country. The water, where it was least deep, reached half-way up the legs; and in all this tract we found only one little island of dry land, where we killed a bear and dried its flesh. It would be difficult to give an idea of the trouble we had to get out of this miserable country, where it rained night and day. We were obliged to sleep on the trunks of two great trees placed together, and to make our fire on the trees, to eat our dogs and to carry our baggage across large tracts covered with reeds. In short, I never suffered so much in my life as in this journey to the Mississippi, which we reached on the 11th of July."

Finally Tonty reached a village of the Coroas and was hospitably received. For three days not a morsel of food had he eaten. The savages sympathized with his sufferings and feasted him royally. He pursued his way, but in the miasmatic region he had traversed he had absorbed the germs of a fever, and he lingered on the Arkansas for a fortnight before he could pursue his toilsome way back to the Illinois. He wearily climbed his beloved Rock in September, 1690.

The narrative of Tonty's life, which was sent to Paris in 1693, ends here. Four years later it was made the basis of a spurious work by an anonymous writer, whose fertility of imagination supplied the embellishments. Tonty repudiated this document.

For ten years after this last trip down the Mississippi Tonty remained at the Rock, endeavoring to enlist the aid of the French court in carrying out the plan left uncompleted by La Salle's untimely death. Tonty was the only man who realized the vast possibilities in

this undeveloped empire. Despite the discouraging indifference at court that repulsed his efforts, he sought with his feeble forces at the Rock to hold the western portal to this empire for his adopted country, till stronger influences than his own should succeed in spurring the French to fuller realization of neglected opportunities. On his lofty rock he reigned like a monarch over the surrounding tribes, and his inspiration and diplomacy banded them to united action in repulsing the Iroquois. The advance of the Five Nations was thus checked and English conquest of the western soil delayed for many years. His services were but ill-requited. The greedy policy of the French authorities led to a proclamation against the Frenchmen who were trapping in the western country, ordering their arrest and seizure of their furs. Tonty and his companion La Forest were shown some consideration, it is true. They were expressly excluded from this inhibition; but they were limited to two canoes in trading, not a princely resource to maintain their establishment on the Illinois. Tonty was reduced to sending a petition to the minister of marine for a company "that he may continue his services in this country, where he has not ceased to harass the Iroquois by enlisting the Illinois against them in his majesty's cause." In this petition, wherein his services are recited without adornment and in the briefest possible manner, Tonty presents his prayer for a company "in consideration of his voyages and heavy expenses and considering also that during his services of seven years as captain he has not received any pay." Count Frontenac, who was again governor of New France, strongly endorsed this petition, but nothing ever came of it.[12]

But if Tonty's attempt to secure aid in bringing to fruition the plans of La Salle met with but cold response, his efforts finally bore fruit. After La Salle's disastrous expedition to Matagorda Bay, the Mississippi river colonization scheme was discredited at court. Not till Tonty's narrative was received, together with an estimate prepared by him for building a vessel at the Arkansas to secure a cargo of buffalo hides and pearls with which to sail for France, was interest in the scheme revived. An added impetus was the rumor that the English and Spanish were also about to sail for the mouth of the Mississippi to secure possession of this great highway. The gallant Le Moyne d'Iberville, whose remarkable exploits in New France and in the Hudson Bay country had given him great prestige, had the influence at court which Tonty lacked. With a goodly retinue he sailed for the Mississippi country and went up that stream to found a colony. Un-

12. Ingratitude was the meed of nearly all of the courageous pioneers of New France. Joliet and Perrot were allowed to die in poverty, if not neglect; Bienville's ill-fated colony was left to starvation or pestilence; La Salle's unfortunate companions at Matagorda Bay were abandoned, and no effort was made to rescue the survivors from their captors. Even the lion-hearted Frontenac was made the victim of an indifferent monarch's caprices.

certain whether he had reached his destination, all doubts were removed when an old Indian chief clad in a coat of blue gave into his hands the letter which fourteen years before Tonty had confided to the Bayagoula chief to be given to La Salie. At Biloxi Bay they erected a stockade and began the settlement that was destined to be the foundation of Old Louisiana.

XII.

WITH THE COLONY OF OLD BILOXI.

Here Henry de Tonty joined the colonists in the year 1700. For nearly twenty years he had toiled in the face of every discouragement to maintain his fort of St. Louis. On the 25th day of November, 1698, the Count Frontenac died, and the last hope that Tonty might have entertained that he would be permitted to pick up the thread dropped by his dead friend was shattered. Men less friendly and less sympathetic came into power. A royal decree came abandoning the fort on the Rock. Determined to join d'Iberville, with a few faithful followers Tonty floated down the Illinois, waving a sad farewell to the bold escarpment on whose topmost level he had made his home so many years.

The Louisiana colonists received him with open arms. For four years he shared their varied fortunes, aiding them with his knowledge of woodcraft and savage lore. He made an expedition to the Chickasaw nation, when the security of the colony was threatened. He persuaded them to peace despite the instigation of the English, who sought to extinguish French colonization through the medium of these savage allies. The efforts thus resulted in enlisting in the French interests 2,000 Chickasaws. Among his old Indian friends, too, he sought good will for the new arrivals. His services were of inestimable value. Nor were they all of a pacific nature. When by an act of treachery the Alabamas raised the hatchet, Tonty aided Bienville in executing vengeance upon the treacherous Indians. He led the night surprise on the camp of the enemy, who fled and left the camp, with war canoes and hunting booty, to the attacking Frenchmen.

In 1704 there arrived at the colony a vessel with supplies from Havana. While the colonists were rejoicing over the acquisition of the stores, their joy turned to terror, for with the vessel there came the germs of the pestilential scourge, yellow fever. The vessel's crew was almost exterminated. More than half the colonists lay dead or dying. Tonty nursed the living and helped to bury the dead. Finally he, too, succumbed. In the soil of Old Biloxi, in the month of September, 1704 was dug the grave of the most unselfish and loyal, as he

was one of the most courageous and intrepid, of the many knightly men who blazed the path whence entered civilization into what later became known as the old Northwest.

Where Tonty lies buried is not known. Some day the farmer's plowshare or the workman's spade will unearth in the narrow peninsula of Old Biloxi a skeleton with a rusted iron hand.

APPENDIX.

TONTY'S PLACE IN HISTORY.

It has been the lot of few voyageurs associated with the stirring history of the West to receive such universal commendation as has been given Henry de Tonty, both as to his character and achievements. It is the more disappointing to the student of history that the recorded facts of Tonty's part in the exploration of the great valley of the Mississippi are fragmentary and scattered. All of the numerous accounts that have been written of La Salle's explorations perforce have allusions to his association with Tonty, but they obscure Tonty's part in these explorations or ignore it. It is only by putting together these widely scattered fragments, and patching them with Tonty's brief autobiography, that a connected narrative can be obtained. In this particular Benjamin Suite's recent contribution to the Canadian Royal Society's publications, entitled "Les Tonty" and published in Vol. XI., is very helpful to the student. Of the numerous books devoted to La Salle, those that contain the fullest details concerning Tonty's achievements are Sparks' "Life of La Salle" and Parkman's "Discovery of the Great West." The last chapter of Tonty's life—his connection with the struggling colony at Biloxi—is best told in Grace King's "Sieur de Bienville."

In some of the local histories of Illinois, reference is made to Tonty's life at Starved Rock, but much misinformation is interspersed.

The memoir of Tonty is published in Margry's "Memoirs et Documents," Vol I. A translation is given in Falconer's "Discovery of the Mississippi" and in French's "Historical Collections of Louisiana," Vol I. These books are now rare.

Tonty's memoir was sent to France in 1693, and comprises an account of "the discovery of the Mississippi and neighboring nations by M. de La Salle, from the year 1678 to the time of his death, and by the Sieur de Tonty to the year 1691." This memoir forms the basis of a spurious work printed four years later in Paris, entitled "Derniers Decouvertes dans l'Amerique Septrentrionale, de M. de La Salle, par Chevalier Tonti, Gouverneur du Fort St. Louis, aux Illinois."

When Tonty joined d'Iberville, he was shown this document, and promptly disavowed authorship.

Of Tonty's contemporaries, Father Membré relates the story of the retreat from the Iroquois, to Green Bay; also the first expedition to the mouth of the Mississippi. Joutel mentions the reception of La Salle's unfortunate companions at Ft. St. Louis, after their long wanderings in the morasses and wildernesses of the South; so does Father Anastasius Douay. Parts of these memoirs are published in Shea's "Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi."

Hennepin, in his "History of Louisiana," gives an account of Father Ribourde's death, and censures Tonty for deserting the venerable priest. Hennepin admits that his account is based on hearsay evidence. He is the only historian who has a word of censure for Tonty. As Parkman aptly says, Hennepin's censure is equivalent to commendation.

The journals of Sauvole, La Harpe and d'Iberville have references to Tonty's career of four years with the Biloxi colonists. Charlevoix (Vol. 3, Shea's translation) gives some account of Tonty's connection with the Fort St. Louis on the Illinois.

Magazine writers have written without limit concerning the achievements of La Salle, Duluth, Joliet and many other voyageurs of that period, but the lack of accessible material referring to Tonty has discouraged them from including his achievements in the list of favorite subjects. Poole's Index does not contain a single reference to Touty.

Parkman says: "Those intimate with the late lamented Dr. Sparks will remember his often-expressed wish that justice should be done to the memory of Tonty."

In fiction, Mrs. Mary Hartwell Catherwood has made Tonty the hero of her charmingly-told "Story of Tonty." The man of the iron hand also figures in her shorter tale of "Little Renault." In these stories Mrs. Catherwood has with rare fidelity limned scences of the picturesque life of a most picturesque period.

These are the estimates of Tonty's character recorded by contemporaneous and later historians:

"He (Tonty) is beloved by all the voyageurs. It was with deep regret that we parted from him. He is the man who best knows the country; he is loved and feared everywhere."—St. Cosme, a missionary whom Tonty escorted on a journey in 1699.

"Tonty was a man of capacity, courage and resolution. * * * All the facts that can be ascertained concerning the Chevalier de Tonty are such as give a highly favorable impression of his character, both as an officer and a man. His constancy and his steady devotion to La Salle are marked not only by a strict obedience to orders, but by a faithful friendship and chivalrous generosity. His courage and address were strikingly exhibited in his intercourse with the Indans, as well in war as in peace; but his acts were performed where there were few to observe and fewer to record them. Hence it is that historians have done him but partial justice. And it is most unfortunate that the narrative from his own pen, originally written, as his character justifies us in believing, with fidelity and truth, should have been so mutilated and deformed by some mischievous hand, as to render it a reproach to his name, rather than what it might have been, a testimony to his merits and an honorable monument to his memory."—Jared Sparks.

"He (La Salle) arrived in Canada toward the close of September, 1678, with the Sieur de Tonty, an Italian gentleman full of spirit and resolution, who afterward so courageously and faithfully served him in all his designs."—Father Membré.

"About the middle of February—an exceedingly cold February, even Iberville remarks—while the clearing, cutting and building were in progress (at Biloxi) there arrived of an afternoon a visitor than whom no one on the continent could have been more useful or more welcome to Iberville; this was Henry de Tonty, without question the most unselfish, loyal, straightford and intelligent pioneer France ever possessed in America. He had heard of the settlement at the mouth of the river and came to make proffer of his services. Tonty here had opportunity to discover the fraudulent manuscript imposed as his upon Iberville."—Grace King.

"The Sieur de Tonty arrived at the beginning of winter with several Frenchmen; this made our stay (at Ft. St. Louis) much more agreeable, as this brave gentleman was always inseparably attached to the interests of the Sieur de La Salle, whose lamentable fate we concealed from him, it being our duty to give the first news to the court." Father Douay's narrative, as related by Le Clerq.

"Although we were destitute of succor, yet the Sieur de Tonty never lost courage; he kept up his position among the Illinois either by inspiring them with the hopes which he built on the Sieur de La Salle's return, or by instructing them in the use of firearms and many arts in the European way. He taught them how to defend themselves by palisades, and even made them erect a kind of little fort with intrenchments. so that, had they had a little more courage, I have no doubt they would have been in a position to sustain themselves."—Membre's relation of the Iroquois raid in the Illinois country.

"I cannot sufficiently praise his (Tonty's) zeal for the success of this enterprise. (Expedition against the Iroquois). He is a lad of great enterprise and boldness, who undertakes considerable. He left Fort des Illinois last February to seek M. de La Salle at the lower end of the Mississippi. He has been as far as the sea, where he learned nothing of M. de La Salle except that some savages had seen him set sail and go towards the South. He returned to Ft. St. Louis des Illinois and thence to Montreal, where he arrived in the beginning of July. You will see, my Lord, the orders I have issued for marching the Illinois in the rear of the Iroquois. He will have to walk 300 leagues overland, for these savages are not accustomed to canoes."—Denonville, governor of New France, in official reports to the minister of marine.

"Tonty must be ranked next to La Salle, who contributed the most towards the exploration and settlement of the Mississippi valley."—B. F. French.

TONTY'S PETITION.

The petition of the Chevalier de Tonty to the Count de Pontchartrain, minister of marine, bears no date. It is believed to have been written at Quebec in the year 1690, at which time Count Frontenac was governor-general of New France. The petition of Tonty, as translated by Sparks from the original, deposited in the archives of the Marine department at Paris, is here given:

Monseigneur:

Henry de Tonty humbly represents to your highness that he entered the military service as a cadet, and was employed in that capacity in the years 1668 and 1669; and that he afterwards served as a midshipman four years, at Marseilles and Toulon, and made seven campaigns, that is, four on board ships of war and three in the galleys. While at Messina he was made a captain, and in the interval lieutenant of the first company of a regiment of horse. When the enemy attacked the post of Libisso his right hand was shot away by a grenade, and he was taken prisoner and conducted to Metasse, where he was detained six months and then exchanged for the sons of the governor of that place. He then went to France, to obtain some favor from his majesty, and the king granted him three hundred livres. He returned to the service in Sicily, made the campaign as a volunteer in the galleys, and when the troops were discharged, being unable to obtain the employment he solicited at court, on account of the general peace, he decided, in 1678, to join th late Monsieur de LaSalle, in order to accompany him in the discoveries of Mexico, during which, until 1682, he was the only officer who did not abandon him.

These discoveries being finished, he remained, in 1683, commandant of Fort St. Louis of the Illinois; and, in 1684, he was there attacked by two hundred Iroquois, whom he repulsed with great loss on their side. During the same year he repaired to Quebec under the orders of M. de la Barre. In 1685 he returned to the Illinois, according to the orders which he received from the court, and from M. de La Salle, as a captain of foot in a marine detachment, and governor of Fort St. Louis. In 1686, he went with forty men in canoes at his own expense, as far as the Gulf of Mexico, to seek for M. de La Salle. Not being able to find him there, he returned to Montreal and put himself under the orders of Monsieur Denonville, to engage in the war with the Iroquois. At the head of a band of Indians, in 1687, he proceeded two hundred leagues by land, and as far in canoes, and joined the army, when, with these Indians and a company of Canadians, he forced the ambuscade of the Tsonnonthouans.

The campaign over, he returned to the Illinois, whence he departed in 1689, to go in search of the remains of M. de La Salle's colony; but, being deserted by his men, and unable to execute his design, he was compelled to relinquish it. when he had arrived within seven days' march of the Spaniards. Ten months were spent in going and returning. As he now finds himself without employment. he prays that, in consideration of his voyages and heavy expenses, and considering also that during his service of seven years as captain he has not received any pay, your highness will be pleased to obtain for him from his majesty a company, with which he may continue his service in this country, where he has not ceased to harass the Iroquois by enlisting the Illinois against them in his majesty's cause.

And he will continue his prayers for the health of your highness.

HENRY DE TONTY.

Nothing can be more true than the account given by the Sieur de Tonty in this petition; and should his majesty reinstate the seven companies which have been disbanded in this country, there will be justice in granting one of them to him, or some other recompense for the services which he has rendered, and which he is now returning to render, at Fort St. Louis of the Illinois. FRONTENAC.

TAKING POSSESSION OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

When La Salle and Tonty, at the deltas of the Mississippi, planted a column and attached the arms of France thereto, they secured for the king of France an empire, whose remarkable richness even they did not dream of. Of the enormous area which France acquired in the new world through the enterprise of her early explorers—from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Applachian to the Rocky mountains, a region drained by the greatest rivers of the North American continent—she retains to-day not as much as an acre. It has been truly said that the French are quick to seize and as quick to release; the Anglo-Saxon slow to acquire, but tenacious in holding.

The French took possession of these inland empires without much care in defining limits. When at the Sault St. Marie, in 1671, St. Lusson in the grandiose manner of the early French commanders, took possession of the entire Western country, he little knew how vast that territory was; at that time the upper Mississippi had not been discovered. The territory which La Salle by proclamation added to the possessions of the French crown was of even vaster extent. That part of it situated west of the Mississippi doubled the territory of the United States, when in 1803 Napoleon relinquished it for the sum of $15,000,000.

It took La Salle about five minutes to formally take possession. These were his words:

"In the name of the most high, mighty, invincible and victorious Prince, Louis the Great, by the grace of God king of France and of Navarre, fourteenth of that name, this ninth day of April, one thousand six hundred and eighty-two, I, in virtue of the commission of his Majesty which I hold in my hand, and which may be seen by all whom it may concern, have taken and do now take, in the name of his Majesty and of his successor to the crown, possession of this country of Louisiana, the seas, harbors, ports, bays, adjacent straits; and all nations, people, provinces, cities, towns, villages, mines, minerals, fisheries, streams and rivers, comprised in the extent of the said Louisiana, from the mouth of the great river St. Louis, on the eastern side, otherwise called Ohio, Alighin, Sipore, or Chukagona, and this with the consent of the Chaounons, Chikachas and other people dwelling therein, with whom we have made alliance; as also along the River Colbert, or Mississippi, and rivers which discharge themselves therein, from its source beyond the country of the Kious or Nadouessious, and this with their consent, and with the consent of the Motantees, Ilinois, Mesigameas, Natches, Koroas, which are the most considerable nations dwelling therein, with whom also we have made alliance either by ourselves, or by others in our behalf, as far as its mouth at the sea, or Gulf of Mexico, about the twenty-seventh degree of the elevation of the North Pole, and also to the mouth of the River of Palms; upon the assurance which we have received from all these nations that we are the first Europeans that have descended or ascended the said River Colbert; hereby protesting against all those who may in future undertake to invade any or all of these countries, people or lands above described, to the prejudice of the right of his majesty, acquired by the consent of the nations herein named. Of which, and of all that can be needed, I hereby take to witness those who hear me, and demand an act of the notary, as required by law."

THE FORT ON STARVED ROCK.

Francis Parkman's description of Starved Rock and the great Illinois village:

The cliff called "Starved Rock," now pointed out to travelers as the chief natural curiosity of the region, rises—steep on three sides as a castle wall—to the height of a hundred and twenty-five feet above the river. In front, it overhangs the water that washes its base; its western brow looks down on the tops of the forest trees below; and on the east lies a wide gorge or ravine, choked with the mingled foliage of oaks, walnuts and elms; while in its rocky depths a little brook creeps down to mingle with the river. From the trunk of the stunted cedar that leans forward from the brink, you may drop a plummet into the river below, where the catfish and the turtles may plainly be seen gliding over the wrinkled sands of the cler and shallow current. The cliff is accessible only from behind, where a man may climb up, not without difficulty, by a steep and narrow passage. The top is about an acre in extent. Here, in the month of December, La Salle and Tonty began to entrench themselves. They cut away the forest that crowned the rock, built tsorehouses and dwellings of its remains, dragged timber up the rugged pathway, and encircled the summit with a palisade.

Go to the banks of the Illinois, where it flowes by the village of Utica, and stand on the meadow that borders it on the north. In front glides the river, a musket-shot in width; and from the farther bank rises, with a gradual slope, a range of wooded hills that hide from sight the vast prairie behind them. A mile or more on your left these gentle acclivities end abruytly in the lofty front of the great cliff, called by the French the Rock of Ft. Louis, looking boldly out from the forests that environ it; and, three miles distant on your right, you discern a gap in the steep bluffs that here bound the valley, marking the mouth of the river Vermilion, called Aramoni by the French. Now stand in fancy on this same spot in the early autumn of the year 1680. You are in the midst of the great town of the Illinois—hundreds of mat-covered lodges, and thousands of congregated savages.

Enter one of their dwellings: they will not think you an intruder. Some friendly squaw will lay a mat for you by the fire; you may seat yourself upon it, smoke your pipe and study the lodge and its inmates by the light that streams through the holes at the top. Three or four fires smoke and smoulder on the ground down the middle of the long arched structure; and , as to each fire there are two families, the place is somewhat crowded when all are present. But now there is breathing room, for many are in the fields. A squaw sits weaving a mat of rushes; a warrior, naked except his moccasins, and tattooed with fantastic devices, binds a stone arrow-head to its shaft, with the fresh sinews of a buffalo. Some lie asleep, some sit staring in vacancy, some are eating, some are squatted in lazy chat around a fire. The smoke brings water to your eyes; the fleas annoy you; small unkempt children, naked as young puppies, crawl about your knees and will not be repelled.

You have seen enough. You rise, and go out again into the sunlight. It is, if not a peaceful, at least a languid scene. A few voices break the stillness, mingled with the joyous chirping of crickets from the grass. Young men lie flat on their faces, basking in the sun. A group of their elders are smoking around a buffalo-skin on which they have just been playing a game of chance with cherry-stones. A lover and his mistress, perhaps, sit together under a shed of bark, without uttering a word. Not far off is the graveyard, where lie the dead of the village, some buried in the earth, some wrapped in skins and laid aloft on scaffolds, above the reach of wolves. In the cornfields around, you see squaws at their labor, and children driving off intruding birds; and your eye ranges over the meadows beyond spangled with the yellow blossoms of the river-weed and the Rudbeckia, or over the bordering hills still green with the foliage of summer.

This, or something like it, one may safely affirm, was the aspect of the Illinois village at noon of the tenth of September (1680). In a hut apart from the rest, you would probably have found the Frenchmen. Among them was a man, not strong in person, and disabled, moreover, by the loss of a hand; yet, in this den of barbarism, betraying the language and bearing of one formed in the most polished civilization of Europe. This was Henri de Tonty.

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